



FOLK MUSIC OF MAHARASHTRA

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Paper Received On: 25 September 2023

Peer Reviewed On: 21 October 2023

Published On: 01 December 2023

Abstract

The origin of music in the primary state of man was a natural process. Human beings found the sound from nature. Listening to these natural sounds, he tried to replicate and use them for his own self-expression. Man tried to create sound from his vocal chords and other available things such as wood, stone, bones of animals, etc. After a gradual process of developing these sounds, rudimentary instruments were created. Using own vocal chords, human beings produced basic vowels and consonances, this in further several thousand years, developed as language and then man started expressing communicating with language. Music and language are the two sides of the same coin in development of human culture. But it is sure that human beings experienced music before language as he used natural sounds and his own vocal chords much before the origin of language. Here we are going to have a brief survey of music as in folk form, which played a multiple role – it symbolized the human society and culture as it was the simple way of entertainment and celebration; and also was a medium of expression to communicate his feelings and thoughts. The folksongs expressed the primal emotions of human beings with simple words and simple tunes. As the culture grew up with complicated patterns of living style, the folk music also became complicated or became formulized and codified.

Folk music (*desi*) has been influential on classical music, which is viewed as a higher art form. Instruments and styles have influenced classical ragas. It is not uncommon for major writers, saints and poets to have large musical libraries and traditions to their name, often sung in *thumri* (semi-classical) style. Most of the folk music of India is dance-oriented. Folk music is the music of common people – peasants, farmers, village occupational, folks, masses adorned with beautifully simple melodies and rhythms, interesting poetry depicting the nature and human mind. The music of people, by people and for people is folk music. It is music for everyone, everything and every occasion! General participation is encouraged to such an

extent in the process of making music that there is a near absence of audience as a separate entity. It involved combination of singing, dancing and playing instruments. From primitive music as human beings experience the cultural growth, music changes its nature and it gets more codified and complex to the extent of 'folk music'

Maharashtra has a rich tradition of music and especially the folk music has many colors and textures in literary and musical sense. The folk songs in Maharashtra can be classified broadly in 4 categories –

1. Songs of women and households
2. Songs of artisans and peasants
3. More codified music forms.
4. Devotional songs

1. Songs of women and households

Owi - *Owi* has a simple repetitive tune of three- four notes, without much obligation to rhythmic cycle. Women sing *Owi* at various occasions, such as during the household work such as grinding the grains, cooking, sweeping, weaving, making garlands, etc. At the time of marriage, naming ceremony, festivals like *Diwali*, *Dasehra*, *Gauri-Ganpati*, etc

Stree-Geet - Songs of women depicting their physical and emotional changes, relations with others, etc. These songs have a secular expression. The subject matter is phases in woman's life, such as pregnancy songs (*Dohaale*), marriage songs (*Dhawale*), lullaby (*Angaai and Palana*), etc.

Khel-geet - songs of games and plays such as *Phugdi*, *Tipari*, *Jhimma*, etc. The tunes are simply hummable, but rhythmic cycles of 4 or 6 beats are attractive and playful.

Saunskaar- Geet – These are ritual songs depicting traditional ways of living, how to behave, dress, eat, etc. These songs are lengthy for describing the details; musically they have attractive tunes, vibrant rhythm, and dramatic element.

Kathaa-Geet - songs based on mythological stories which can continue for hours. These songs initially have repetitive tune, but goes further with sudden dramatic changeovers as the story flows to next episode. Mostly these songs are recited during festivals, family gatherings. Many times, it also contains subtle as well as loud humor.

2. Songs of artisans and peasants

Shram-Geet, Kaarya-Geet are songs during farmer's harvesting activities such as, sowing the seeds, plantation, reaping. Cutting of crops. Harvesting of crops.

Dhangari Owi,-. songs of shepherds, is also melodically and rhythmically interesting song.
Nisarg-Geet – the songs depicting the seasons, natural beauty, cycle of day and night.

3. More codified music forms

Tamasha - Moving on from the sophisticated man's entertainment to the masses. The Tamasha was originally a platform to show a mirror to society, but degenerated into a crude and erotic dance form. The movements and lyrics contribute to ribald fun. Very popular among the rural areas, it is one of the forms of folk entertainment that is in a healthy state.

Lavani - *Lavani* is a highly decorative form of music and dance, supposed to be a feminine form of music. Basically it is supposed to be a love song, but reflecting the transition in culture, there are many subjects handled in *Lavani* such as philosophy, portrayal of an important social or political event. *Lavani* has a long tradition of almost thousand years, but it flourished under the patronage of Peshwa rulers. Many *Shahir*-s or poet-singers such as *Haybati*, *Ramjoshi*, *Honaji Bala*, *Sagan Bhau*, *Parashuram*, *Pathhe Bapurao*, etc contributed for the growth of *Lavani*. *Lavani* contains complex musical structure which is supposed to be improvised according to the shades of meaning of the lyric, with change in *Raag* and *Taal*, mixture of *Raags*. *Lavani* got developed as a form of Art music in last century, but later unfortunately lost that status due to inclusion of vulgar poetry and dance. *Lavani* is sung in accompaniment of percussion instruments such as *Dholki*, *Duff* and string instrument *Tuntune*, and also *Sarangi* in yester years – now Organ or Harmonium.,

Lavani has variety of types, such as –*Wagachi Lavani*, *Baithakichi Lavani*, *Baleghati Lavani*, *Chhakkad Lavani* , *Junnari Lavani* , *Haudyachi Lavani* ,*Bhedik Lavani* , *Zagda* or *Sawal-Jawab Lavani* etc.

Powada – *Powada* means ballads sung for heroes of the past, poems composed on many Maharashtrian heroes. Most popular of all being Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. *Powadas* would usually describe heroic deeds of the life of these great leaders, interesting stories of bravery and wars. The repetitive tune of *Powada* is full of vigor, usually in higher octave, fast tempo. The main singer sings the *Powada* with dramatic exposition, while in between two lines the chorus sings words “*Ji Ji Re Ji Ji*”. *Powada* is sung in accompaniment of *Duff* and *Tuntune*.

4. Devotional songs

A large corpus of devotional songs includes *Arati*, *Gajar*, *Stotra*, *Bhajan*, etc. *Abhang* is a specially Marathi form of devotional song. These songs depict the beauty of Gods and Goddesses, their glory or magnitude, devotee or saint's stories, prayers, etc. The devotional

songs are musically mature and complex and many times are equal to the compositions in Art Music. It covers a wide range of musical simplicity to complexity.

Kirtan and Bhajan - It is a musical discourse by a priest or learned man. Bhajan and Kirtan involves the *Abhangs* of five main Marathi saint poets, such as Dnyaneshwar, Namdew, Eknath, Ramdas, Tukaram.

Gawlan – It is a song depicting playful deeds of Lord Krishna teasing the Gopi-s in flavor of music. Gawlans of Eknath are famous.

Bhaarud – it is a song full of satire and hidden philosophical message. Saint Eknaath (14th cent AD) is given the credit of being creator of this form.

Jogwaa is a prayer to Goddess Amba or Durga, sung with percussion instruments *Sambal* and *Dimdi*. The singer also dances with small footsteps while singing. During Navaratri period is common.

Gondhal - It is a noisier version of the Kirtans. A troupe of trained musicians would accompany the entire community as they gathered to sing in the praise of the saints and gods. It was more of a collective activity than actual prayer. *Gondhal* is performed usually at auspicious ceremonies such as marriage, naming ceremony.

Folk instruments

Even though instruments in folk music are much in number, they play a significant role. Most of the string and wind instruments in folk music have a rustic or raw tonal texture. Comparing to instruments used in Art music, the folk instruments are mainly simple in make and need least maintenance. They are mostly manufactured with the raw material found in the specific geography. Folk music involves use of many a-tonal or cymbal instruments such as *Taal*, *Ghungru*, *Chipli*, *Kartaal*, *Khulkhula*, etc. Most of the folk instruments are used to create a backdrop of rhythmic pattern than giving support of base note, unlike the Art music. Most of the times, there is no solo performance of instruments, but whenever it is, instruments reproduce the song on instrument rather than playing tunes specially crafted for instruments.

Types of folk instruments in Maharashtra

The various types of folk musical instruments played in Maharashtra., may be divided into four groups. They are string instruments, wind or blowing instruments, percussion instruments and cymbal instruments.

- **String instruments** - *Ektari*, *Tamburi*, *Tutune*, *Chondke*

- **Wind instruments** - Basari, Pawa, Pawari, Alguj, Shankh, Shing, Tutari
- **Percussion instruments** - Dholki, Dhokal, Damadi, Duff, Sambal, Halagi
- **Cymbals** - Taal, Manjira, Chipli, Ghungru, Ghanta

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Cite Your Article as:

Prof. Smt. S.M. Joshi (Ratnaparkhi). (2023). FOLK MUSIC OF MAHARASHTRA. In *Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science & English Language* (Vol. 11, Number 60, pp. 296–300). Zenodo.
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